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## GENERAL BOOTH'S PANACEA.<sup>1</sup>

IT is wonderful what a fondness people still have for what Carlyle used to call "Morrison's Pills" — for cure-alls which promise to relieve them at once of almost every malady. It is true that the appetite for such marvels in the matter of medicine for the body is now mainly limited to "the lower classes"; but for social ailments, for diseases in society, the appetite for Morrison's wares has scarcely abated. Land-nationalization and Prohibition are both cases in point.

When one chances to make some such remark as this, it is usual to reply that, after all, it is very natural. Men who care strongly about any reform, or supposed reform, are sure to exaggerate its efficacy; fanaticism is a close companion of earnest belief. This is true enough; but it does not greatly improve the situation. It rightly suggests that we should take a charitable view of those who prescribe the pill; but it does not make the pill any the more efficacious. If there is anything that experience and science teach, it is that society is complex, its parts interconnected and its evolution gradual. To suppose that any one force or group or forces is going to completely change its character within a brief space of time, is utterly to misapprehend the nature of social problems.

The more we examine the "Scheme" presented to the British public and the world by General Booth at the end of last year, the more evident does it become that it is but another Morrison's Pill. The fashion of pills changes; and this last

<sup>1</sup> In *Darkest England and the Way Out*. By General BOOTH. Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1890. — 385, xxxi pp.

An Examination of General Booth's Social Scheme, adopted by the Council of the London Charity Organisation Society. C. S. LOCH, Secretary. Second Edition. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1890. — 102 pp.

"In Darkest England" on the Wrong Track. By B. BOSANQUET, M.A. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1890. — 72 pp.

remedy is not quite like the old ones. The skilful writer or writers who assisted General Booth to put his scheme into an attractive shape had learned this much at any rate—that one single measure could hardly be expected to remove all our troubles. They accordingly unroll a long list, a score or more, of plans and suggestions. This gives an air of completeness and reasonableness to the scheme which probably reassured the author, and has certainly impressed his readers. It seems the fairest thing in the world to say to the charitable public: “Here is plenty to choose from. If you don’t like to subscribe to this, you can subscribe to that. You pay your money and you take your choice.” Is it just, then, to liken it to Mr. Morrison’s simple prescriptions? One cannot help thinking so, and that for the following reasons. In the first place, every part of the scheme is subordinate to one particular promise on the part of General Booth, *viz.*, that if he is given sufficient funds, he will bring it about that what he calls “the submerged tenth” shall all be set to work. In the second place, all other reforming agencies are disregarded or belittled. Moreover, all the measures suggested are to be attempted by the Salvation Army, and the Salvation Army alone. And finally, although in an occasional passage the writer of *In Darkest England* seems to invite help from outside in the execution of his plans, the book is practically an appeal to the public for money, and for nothing else. The new fashion of pill is no longer: “Pass this or that piece of legislation, and society will be regenerated.” It is: “Put your money in the slot, and the machine will work. Send in your subscriptions, and the Salvation Army will do the rest.”

There is a good deal in the advertisement of the pill,—that is to say in the book entitled *In Darkest England*,—which might have been expected to excite misgiving. Throughout there is an almost overpowering flavor of sensational journalism. Look, for example, at the story of an “out-of-work,” “taken down from his own lips,” with its picturesque transitions and adroit literary touches.<sup>1</sup> With the clever superficial journalist’s style there is his wonted, yet astounding, ignorance. We might be

<sup>1</sup> Booth, pp. 33 *seq.* 59 *seq.*

sure, for instance, that we should come across that conception of "the laws of political economy," which, long after it has been abandoned by all teachers of the science, still finds a home in Fleet Street ; and we quickly find it,<sup>1</sup> with the usual display of virtuous indignation over the economist's hard-heartedness.

Another reason for distrust, quite apart from the character of General Booth's proposals in themselves, is the looseness and inconsistency of his statements as to the extent of the evils with which he proposes to deal. He "leaves to others," he says, "the formulation of ambitious programmes for the reconstruction of our entire social system."<sup>2</sup> All he aims at is to "save"<sup>3</sup> (in the sense of providing food, shelter and work for) "three million men, women and children,"<sup>4</sup> a "submerged tenth" of the population of Great Britain. This estimate, he declares, will be found lower than that of any other writer ; it is the minimum that can be reasonably asserted ; if it errs at all, it is in the direction of excessive "sobriety."<sup>5</sup> He bases it on the figures of Mr. Charles Booth — *not* a member of the Salvation Army hierarchy, it may be well to state, but the author of the remarkable volume on *East London* which was commented on in the *POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY* for September, 1890. He does indeed reproduce Mr. Booth's figures,<sup>6</sup> but with this significant change, that he alters the descriptive epithets for others each a shade darker : thus "Very poor, class A" becomes "Homeless" ; "Very poor, class B" becomes "Starving" ; and "Poor" becomes "Very poor." Some excuse may possibly be offered for this. It was pointed out, in the article just referred to,<sup>7</sup> that Mr. Booth's summaries of his own results were somewhat too optimistic for the evidence. General Booth may, therefore, have thought himself justified in using stronger terms than his authority. But what he was not justified in doing was in making this change without distinctly calling the reader's attention to it. Even if we pardon this use of his material, General Booth's figures are open to a good deal of criticism ; and this they have received from Mr. Bosanquet and

<sup>1</sup> Booth, pp. 36, 43.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 83.<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.<sup>7</sup> *POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY*, V, 509.

Mr. Loch.<sup>1</sup> The latter arrives at the conclusion that "though General Booth proposes to deal with a submerged tenth, by no possibility can the question now before him be the treatment of more than a submerged seventy-seventh."<sup>2</sup> But the underlying cause of all the exaggerations, inconsistencies, discrepancies and other defects in his estimates is to be found in a fact to which sufficient attention has hardly been directed. It is that General Booth is himself very much at sea as to the classes he is going to save, and constantly shifts his own point of view. Sometimes it is the homeless, the starving, the out-of-work and the criminal classes, in the ordinary sense of those terms :

What, then, is Darkest England? For whom do we claim that urgency. . . . I claim it for the Lost, for the Outcast, for the Disinherited of the World. These, it may be said, are but phrases. Who are the Lost? I reply, not in a religious but in a social sense, the Lost are *those who have gone under*, who have lost their foothold in society, those to whom the prayer to our Heavenly Father "Give us day by day our daily bread" is either unfulfilled, or only fulfilled by the Devil's agency ; by the earnings of vice, the proceeds of crime, or the contribution enforced by the threat of the law [page 18].

Darkest England may be described as consisting broadly of three circles, one within the other. The outer and *widest* circle is inhabited by *the starving and the homeless*, but honest, Poor ; the second by those who live by Vice ; and the third and innermost region at the centre is peopled by those who exist by Crime [page 24].

At other times he includes the whole of the casual laborer class, as well as the sweated workers in "domestic" industries.

To these [houseless, starving, prisoners and indoor paupers] must be added, at the very best, a million, representing those dependent upon the criminal, lunatic and other classes, . . . and *the more or less helpless of the class immediately above the houseless and starving* [page 22].

Still more noteworthy is a passage in which he meets the objection that the men who come to his "Refuges" will not be amenable to discipline.

Discipline, and that of the most merciless description, is enforced on multitudes of *these people* even now. Nothing that the most authorita-

<sup>1</sup> Bosanquet, pp. 40-44; Loch, pp. 35-46.

<sup>2</sup> Loch, p. 45.

tive organization . . . could devise . . . could for a moment compare with *the slavery enforced to-day in the dens of the sweater*. . . . There is no discipline so brutal as that of the sweater; there is no slavery so relentless as that *from which we seek to deliver* the victims [page 266].

It is, indeed, only by reckoning in these that he can make up his "tenth." But, if he includes them, much of his language—such as "living in little short of perpetual misery," "a vast despairing multitude," "the residuum" and the like—is misleading. What is still more important is that, if this is what he means, he *is* embarking, in spite of his disclaimer, upon an attempt to re-organize society. On one of those not infrequent occasions when General Booth, or his literary representative, slips out of grandiloquence into slang, he remarks that to "save" "three millions of people" is "a large order." To put an end to casual labor and to sweated labor is a very much bigger "order" than General Booth realizes.

But of all the reasons for misgiving perhaps the most weighty is this. General Booth speaks throughout as if no serious attempt had hitherto been made to grapple with the evils he points out, and is absolutely silent about all the many movements around him which are already proceeding on lines similar to those he lays down. For instance, speaking of charity in the ordinary sense of the term, and its inadequacy, he makes the astounding assertion: "There is at present no attempt at Concerted Action."<sup>1</sup> What then of the Charity Organization Society? Let us grant, what probably General Booth would assert, that the platform of the Charity Organization Society is a narrow one. Let us even go further, and allow that in some localities it is so unpopular—partly by its own fault, but still more owing to the stupidity of the public—that it can hardly hope to realize its aim. Still, every one who knows anything at all about the social history of the last quarter of a century knows that it has done and is doing admirable work. General Booth might have pointed out, if he had chosen, its comparative ill success. Perhaps his literary adviser thought it invidious to

<sup>1</sup> Booth, p. 73.

do so. But that cannot excuse a statement which, as it stands, obviously contradicts facts.

Then, again, would any one who reads the chapters on the "Prison Gate Brigade"<sup>1</sup> and the "Rescue Homes for Women"<sup>2</sup> guess that there were already prisoners' aid societies in connection with every jail, which were carrying out with some measure of success the very plans General Booth suggests; and that there were already hundreds of refuges for women in existence? Read the awful account of one of the resorts of prostitutes in Woolwich, "where one of our Rescue Homes is established"; with its picture of violence so great that policemen hardly venture down the street, but where "our two lasses go unharmed and loved at all hours."<sup>3</sup> Does not the narrative imply that the Salvation Army alone ventures into this hell-upon-earth to bring hope and deliverance to its wretched inhabitants? And yet for years women equally compassionate, equally inspired by the spirit of self-sacrifice, have been doing their best there. General Booth may reply that silence is not denial; that he is pleading for help to his own organization, and cannot turn aside to discuss what others are doing. But again we must remember that his book is substantially an appeal for money. If he gets money in large sums, it will be from people who know little of what others besides General Booth are doing, and who will get their information almost entirely from what they find in this volume. Certainly General Booth cannot be said to err on the side of generosity and delicate consideration for others.

Notwithstanding all these very strong reasons for hesitation, the charitable public has responded liberally to the appeal. Before the end of January in the present year, General Booth had received £100,000, and his scheme had been "publicly inaugurated."<sup>4</sup> It becomes necessary, therefore, to see exactly what the scheme is. General Booth proposes to establish:

(1) The "*City Colony*." This will consist of "a Receiving House for the Destitute in every great centre of population,"<sup>5</sup> where, for the sum of four pence, every person that

<sup>1</sup> Booth, pp. 137 *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 188 *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> See the English newspapers of January 30, 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Booth, p. 94.

applies will be provided with food and shelter for the night; and where, in the more frequent case of the entirely penniless, every applicant will be enabled to earn the sum required. This will involve the creation of "Industrial Workshops." Hitherto employment has been found for most of the applicants in the manufacture of benches and other requisites for the Salvation Army; but articles are also produced for the outside market,<sup>1</sup> and it is intended to enlarge this side of the work as part of an effort to destroy sweating.<sup>2</sup> Closely associated with the "Factories" are to be a number of "Rescue Homes for Women," and of homes for discharged prisoners.

2. The "*Farm Colony*." There are to be a number of settlements in various parts of England, not far from the great cities, and yet not near enough to a town or village to incur any risk from public-houses. To these settlements are to be drafted from the factory and its appendages such persons as seem likely to behave themselves and work satisfactorily. Their labor is to be chiefly in the direction of spade husbandry, market gardening, and fruit-growing. After a time, however, an attempt will be made to establish village industries.

3. The "*Colony over the Sea*." To this emigrants are to be sent under proper supervision and direction, after they have received a suitable training upon the farms.

These are the essential features of "the Scheme."<sup>3</sup> Everything else is subsidiary; and with the three "colonies" the whole project stands or falls. Indeed, in criticizing it, we may for the present confine our attention to the first part of it, the "City Colony." It is hardly likely that the farm-settlements can be established in the shape General Booth proposes, — and it is certain that reformed settlers cannot be sent in the "gospel-ship" to the colony over the sea, — before the city factories and refuges have had a considerable measure of success.

In examining the project it is advisable, for the sake of clearness of thought, to subtract from it, for a moment, what General Booth regards as an essential element — its association with the Salvation Army. We may then turn back, and ask how far

<sup>1</sup> Booth, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 91-93, 272, 273.



our conclusions need to be modified by the consideration that the Salvation Army is to work the plan.

Suppose some philanthropist, whose labors were not connected with religious efforts like those of the Salvation Army, asked our money to assist him in carrying out such a scheme, — what should we say? We should bring this fatal objection, that experience makes it certain that the refuges and workshops would do more harm than good. It is not as if there were a certain definite number of vagrants and loafers, and these could be taken in and provided for without affecting the rest of the population. On the verge of this class are a much larger number who, in spite of hardships and temptations, are struggling along and trying to make a livelihood for themselves. Everything which tends to make vagrancy and loafing more easy, everything which increases the ways in which men can get food and shelter for the asking, increases the number of vagrants and loafers. A sufficient illustration will be found in Mr. Bosanquet's pamphlet :

In the winter of 1887–88 there was great public sympathy for the homeless poor in Trafalgar Square. Benevolent persons gave meals in the Square, opened refuges for homeless cases, distributed through the police tickets for lodging-houses. 1887 and 1888 were not specially bad trading years, compared, for example, with 1886. The result of this outburst of feeling was that the registered number of admissions to casual wards rose in 1887 by 30,000, and in 1888 by 130,000 compared with 1886. It may be said that this is very odd, because it was understood that the casual wards were the hardships to be avoided, and the multiplication of the refuges was meant to save the people from the casual wards. That is the sort of thing that the charitable public swallows. But the fact is, in filling the refuges you at the same time fill the casual wards. You tempt men into begging with your refuges and free meals, and when they have become beggars, they go to refuge and to casual wards pretty indifferently [page 36].

But it will be replied that General Booth will impose conditions such as will prevent this increase of vagrants :

There is no compulsion upon any one to resort to our shelter, but if a penniless man wants food he must, as a rule, do work sufficient to pay for what he has of that and of other accommodation. I say, as a rule,

because, of course, our officers will be allowed to make exceptions in extreme cases, but the rule will be, first work then eat. And that amount of work will be exacted rigorously. It is that which distinguishes this scheme from mere charitable relief [page 106].

The work-test may possibly be efficacious while the factory is still on a very small scale ; but as soon as it is attempted to make a large affair of it, this dilemma will present itself : either the conditions will be relaxed, or the vagrants will not go to it — except in very bad weather. This difficulty is met by the argument<sup>1</sup> that when the public become aware that all men can find work if they will but go to the Salvation Army shelter, they will refuse to give alms, and the beggars will have to go and work. This would be valid enough, if General Booth could at once blot out of existence all other refuges but his own, if he could at once provide work for all the vagrants and unemployed of London or rather of England, and if he could at once persuade all the benevolent that the destitute were being adequately looked after. But he cannot do this. For many years to come he will be establishing his refuges here and there, and people will still go on indulging in miscellaneous charity ; and meanwhile the drones will prosper. Indeed, General Booth would seem to have some misgivings himself ; for he is reported as saying at his inaugural meeting that “he would send to *prison* those who were able-bodied but would not work.” However, the first alternative that I have suggested is the more probable. It is that when large bodies of men come to be gathered together in the “Factories,” discipline will insensibly relax ; most of them will do just as little as they possibly can, consistently with the pretext of being employed ; and the Salvation Army, out of fear for its own reputation, will consent to put up with it.

But is not this, it may be urged, an unnecessarily gloomy and uncharitable view to take of the class General Booth aims at benefiting ? Are there not many honest and hard-working men who are reduced to distress simply by want of work ? On this point General Booth on the one side, and most of those

<sup>1</sup> Booth, p. 261.

who have been long engaged in charitable work on the other, hold diametrically opposite opinions. We are here considering, of course, primarily the condition of things in London. General Booth clearly believes that with a very large number of persons inability to obtain employment is the main cause of distress. In one passage he says: "Work, work! it is always work that they ask."<sup>1</sup> And again:

How do these Out-of-Works conduct themselves when you get them into the Factory? Upon this point I have a very satisfactory report to render. Many, no doubt, are below par, under-fed, and suffering from ill health, or the consequence of their intemperance. Many also are old men, who have been crowded out of the labor market by the younger generation. But without making too many allowances on these grounds, I may fairly say that these men have shown themselves not only anxious and willing, but able to work [page 109].

On the other hand Mr. Loch, the Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, lays down that

want of employment, in nine cases out of ten in which the plea is used, is not the cause of distress. It is, as often as not, drink [page 71].

While it must be allowed that the number and character of the unemployed are subjects upon which we still need a good deal more definite information than is yet accessible, it must also be allowed that, as the question presents itself in relation to General Booth's project, Mr. Loch's dictum is both true and important. Among decent artisans there are occasionally prolonged periods of slack trade. But men of this class usually manage to struggle along with the help of their friends and of their union funds. They seldom take part in an "out-of-work" demonstration, and would very rarely come to General Booth's shelters. Of the unskilled laborers, also, many are doubtless from time to time in sore distress from want of work. But there is a consensus of opinion among those who have a right to make any statements on the subject, that of the frequently-unemployed among the unskilled labor class, a very large proportion are the victims of drink; while the rest are in most cases below the average in

<sup>1</sup> Booth, p. 31.

either steadiness of purpose, strength or ability. It is true that with many observers, even with one so sympathetic and cautious as Mr. Charles Booth, there is too great a tendency to regard these facts as ultimate. Addiction to drink, and still more shiftlessness and incapacity, are very largely the outcome of social conditions. But this does not make the outlook any brighter for General Booth's scheme. Grant that the shiftless and intemperate cannot be held altogether responsible for their ill fortune,—still, unless you put an end to the conditions which tend towards the formation of such a class, you cannot get rid of it; and in trying to get rid of it in the rough and ready way which General Booth proposes, you will but increase it.

This is the fatal defect of the scheme; and it would weaken the argument to say much more. But there is one other consideration to which it may be well to refer.

There are already institutions doing very much the same work—minus the Salvation Army element—as General Booth proposes. The meaning of his scheme is that all these are to be disregarded. The toil of generations of philanthropists is to be thrown away, and we are to start afresh. But we cannot start afresh. The other institutions are there; and what is chiefly needed is to improve them, and to induce them to co-operate with one another, rather than to add to them. Take two examples. In every union there is a casual ward. The casual wards are by no means all they might be: but considering that the country already has the buildings and the officials, that it has a fairer and more reliable system of providing the necessary funds than that of charitable subscription, and that a good deal of experience has been gained,—would it not be wiser to bend our energies towards making the casual wards more useful, than to set up opposition refuges by their side? It must be added that, defective as the casual wards may be, the readers of *In Darkest England* will do well not to accept without verification the particulars concerning them which the book presents. The chapter in question is more than usually inaccurate.

Then again, under the heading, “A new way of escape for lost women,” General Booth says:

We have already made an attempt at grappling with this evil, having about 13 Homes in Great Britain, accommodating 307 girls under the charge of 132 officers. . . . We propose to remodel and greatly increase the number of our Homes both in London and in the provinces [page 158].

But there are already scores of such homes in existence; and there has already begun to be a danger lest the multiplication of them should encourage the very evil they are designed to remedy. Take these quotations from the annual reports of two of the existing institutions:

The House of Mercy at Clewes writes: . . . "The practice is, we regret to say, growing of women going to one Home after another without any real purpose of amendment of life." And again, one of the visitors of the Female Mission to the Fallen remarks: "The multiplicity of Refuges facilitates the practice of evil-disposed women passing from shelter to shelter, disturbing those who are inclined to reform."<sup>1</sup>

Here again it is consolidation that is wanted, not fresh attempts on the old lines.

Let us now return to the element in the scheme which we have temporarily omitted,—its connection with the Salvation Army. It is the refusal to consider this element which gives the arguments of some of the adverse critics such an air of unreality. It often seems as if the two parties to the argument were speaking different languages. For what, in fact, is General Booth's real answer to all such objections as those adduced above? It is that the Salvation Army can safely do what others cannot; because it expects to "save" in the moral sense, to effect a transformation of character in a majority of those who come within its reach. He points to the many cases in which such a transformation has already been brought about.<sup>2</sup> He believes that the same proportionate success will be obtained when the movement has lost its first novelty and is far larger than it is now:

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Loch, pp. 76, 78.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the list of "Shelter trophies," with the final note, in most cases, "got saved." Booth, pp. 100 *seq.*

There's no reason to think that influences which have been blessed of God to the salvation of these poor fellows will not be *equally efficacious* if applied on a wider scale and over a *vaster area* [page 104].

He has no fear lest the wave of moral victory should ever ebb :

Our plan contemplates nothing short of revolutionizing the character of those whose faults are the reason of their destitution. . . . To stop short with them of anything less than a real change of heart will be to invite and ensure failure. But this we are confident of effecting—*anyway in the great majority of cases* [page 252].

And with this hope, his picture of the farm colony and the colony across the sea become very Utopias :

We shall rely greatly for the peace and prosperity of the Farm Colony upon *the sense of brotherhood which will be universal in it* from the highest to the lowest [page 124].

This belief is not altogether devoid of a certain *a priori* reasonableness. It might be argued that the somewhat similar attempts which have more or less failed in the past have either had no connection with religious agencies, or else such religious efforts as have accompanied them have been “from above to below,” the endeavors of a higher class stooping down to those whose thoughts and trials they imperfectly understood ; and that they have never had such a force at their back as the consuming fervor of the Salvationists, social reformers who have themselves lived in the circumstances of those they seek to raise. We are told to notice the wonderful transformations of character that have already taken place under the ministry of the Salvation Army ; and the number of officers, soldiers and “barracks” is held up before us as a guarantee of the strength and permanence of the organization.

This QUARTERLY is not the place for theological discussions ; but it cannot be unfitting to examine this promise of the Salvation Army from the point of view of the student of popular movements. We can do this without committing ourselves to any opinion as to the doctrines taught or the methods resorted to by the Army. Does experience justify the claim that the moral success of the Army is likely to be sufficiently great to

form a safe foundation for the economic task which it has taken in hand? I am afraid the answer must be in the negative. To judge from the evidence of those who have had an opportunity of watching the operations of the Army closely, its history in most localities is something like this. Its arrival creates a great ferment ; during the first few months it gains a band of adherents, and there are some wonderful instances, which cannot be gainsaid, of moral reform. But then the progress of the Army in that particular place comes to an end. Its services are still held ; but adherents are now added one by one at long intervals, and the "Corps" is as little likely to effect the regeneration of the "residuum" in that district as any of the surrounding religious bodies. Hence the growth of the Army in numbers has not been a steady and sustained growth in their earlier fields of labor : it is the result of the constant establishment of fresh corps in new places. This is a feature not peculiar to the Salvation Army ; it has characterized many similar religious movements. But the significance is apparent when we return to the Salvation Army shelters and workshops. They are a comparatively new departure in Salvation Army work ; those who engage in it have now all the enthusiasm of a new enterprise, and the ablest and most fervent officers are drafted into it. With this pressure of ardent sympathy and brotherly love around the poor wretches who enter the shelters, we can in part understand the wonderful changes of character that have been witnessed. But the analogy of other Salvation Army efforts, and of similar movements elsewhere and at other times, makes it humanly certain that this regenerating current will not long continue to flow, especially when it is spread over a wider field. And if it does not, all the objections which would be justly urged against the scheme in the hands of any but General Booth will be abundantly justified. For with such a machinery you must either change the vagrant's character, or you will still further pauperize him, and with him many who have as yet escaped the taint. And, in the long run, the latter result is more probable than the former.

W. J. ASHLEY.